

Design Course

Handmade Type - Part - 3

Typography as an Installation

by

Prof. Sumant Rao and Ruchi Shah

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/course/handmade-type-part-3>



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Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/course/handmade-type-part-3/introduction>

Introduction

In the previous modules of **Handmade Type (Part 1)** and **(Part 2)** we have covered various mediums, explorations with them and experiments resulting in typefaces. They have helped us understand different types of letter forms, their weights, what different mediums express and so on. Previously the assignments were smaller in composition and space making it easier for smaller groups of students to work together, bringing in their own ideas.

In this module we shall see how typography becomes dynamic when it blends with collaboration turning into an interactive installation. The number of people working together to create this type are more, making it a fun project to work on. The classroom moves outdoors as the entire assignment has to be executed outdoors owing to the size and space required for creating the type.

Let's see how students have explored the word 'Park here'.

- What can you think of when you read the word?
- Where could it be made?
- Why should it be made here?
- What are you trying to convey through the word?

One needs to chew over these questions in the mind, while conceptualizing.



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The Project

The project is about taking the context of the word from a book into a 3-dimensional open space and making it dynamic as well. Letting its original meaning, or twisting the meaning completely to allow some playfulness while creating the type.

This was done collaboratively between 6 students. They were given the word, and sent in groups to hunt for a suitable space where it could be created. While the other students sat and brainstormed about the visuals that come up, while thinking about the word.

- What does the word mean? What are the different contexts in which it is used?
- What do you want it to mean?
- Depending on that meaning, what space can you think of, to create this word?
- Can the space also have something to contribute to the meaning of the word?
- What will you use to write your word with? Make a list of materials and objects that correspond or connect with the word 'Park here'.



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The Process

Different words and ideas bring with them a different process to be followed while creating the letterforms. However, the following steps if followed as a rough framework can ensure interesting typographical results.



Understanding the Meaning



Putting down Ideas



Collecting References



Choosing Tools to create the Type

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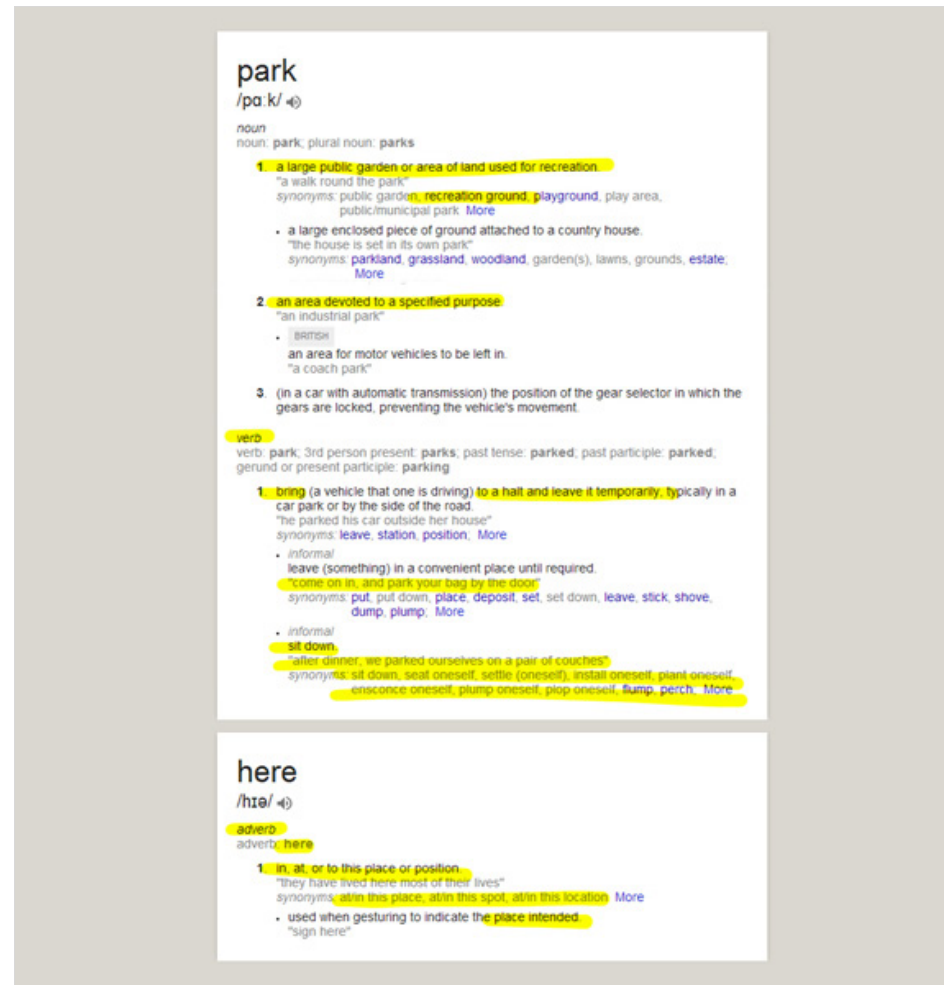
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Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/course/handmade-type-part-3/process/understanding-meaning>

Understanding the Meaning

As the final execution is meant to be outdoors, it is important to spend the maximum amount of time at the site where the word is to be created. Take a look around this space. Look up the meaning of the words, to understand it correctly and the contexts in which it is used.



It is important to know the exact meaning of the word, before ideating. Also read how it is used in different contexts. There is a chance that it might have an abbreviation or it could be associated with a slang, it might also be used differently in conversations across different cultures.

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Putting down Ideas

Start putting together every word and idea that you get into a notebook. You will be surprised to see how this collage of words will help in breaking down the idea, down to the last object and prop to that is to be used for creating the final type.



Walk around, or discuss with your friends, carry a notebook around to jot every word, detail and idea down. When you have all this written, you will find it much easier to sift through the ideas you want to keep or discard. The data can be re written in a more structured format then; it will ensure that every word you are putting into a diagram is taking you one step further in visualizing the final result.

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Good typography is meant to respond to the exact context and by limiting it to objectivity and functionality it would unquestionably cause it to fall short of its real potential. This assignment requires that the students have to let their imagination soar and come up with all sorts of practical and impractical ideas. After putting down the ideas, a mind map connecting certain aspects of the word 'Park here' was drawn. Which ideas could be considered, and which ones had to be dropped? What props would be used? and What could the underlying meaning be? - All this can be decided on the basis of this map.

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/course/handmade-type-part-3/process/putting-down-ideas>

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Collecting References

Students were also sent out with the camera to capture images that encompassed anything to do with both the words 'Park' and 'Here'. They came back with snapshots of images also depicting 'Park here', 'No Parking' and Car parks etc. A collection of images that were shot or references from the internet helped to form a rough pin board of ideas that could shape the final type and fix the exact space where it was to be created.



Create a little scrapbook of images connected to the word. This becomes a small mood board from where one can draw references to the type of colours, objects and spaces that need to be involved while creating the final type.

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Source:

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Choosing Tools to create the Type

Taking into consideration the different contexts of the word 'Park' this is what the students came up with:

- 'No Parking' - The word 'No' has a negative connotation here. This signage is used for not parking cars in particular spaces, that are meant to be left available and open.
- Therefore, 'Park here' meant that the car was supposed to be parked there. But in case of our assignment anything could be parked in a particular space. So what exactly could be parked? And where could it be parked? to create the typeface.
- Park -It also means a green, open space for the public to enjoy, relax in, play games and have interactions.
- Park here - could be a signage in the literal sense pointing to a real 'Park' nearby.
- What do people do in the Park? Apart from playing and walking, they literally 'park' themselves onto the grass.
- Where else can we park ourselves? At an urban home we park ourselves onto couches, sofas, beanbags, floor mats, rugs etc. In the office we park ourselves onto chairs.

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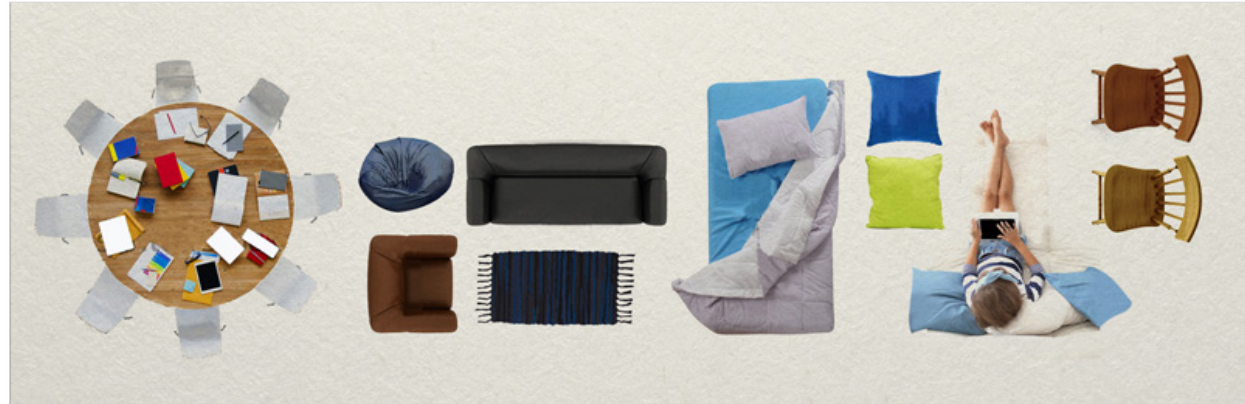
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This search for apt building blocks for the typeface resulted in - park benches, stools, tables and chairs, bean bags, mats etc. which were to be used for creating the letterforms.

The idea is that neither materials nor the efforts are to be spared whilst giving the words a dimension in the real space - the real space for it to be created on, was a lawn outside an academic building which was hardly used. It was selected owing to the grassy patch that had the shadow of a tree and building, making it a well shaded place. This place had a good potential to become a space for informal interactions and relaxing during short breaks taken in the course of day.

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The Making

A collaborative effort can be quite consuming but a lot of fun when the work is well thought of and well divided. It is a collective effort that everyone needs to believe in and be a part of. As the students came together to stage the larger than life typography onto the lawn, these are some images that document the making.



After assembling some props onto the lawn the students having a quick discussion with the guide as to what would be going where, to avoid confusion.



Carrying some of the props like the benches, tables and chairs is tiring job and should be done together to reduce the effort. Here the students are dragging the benches to form the first letter 'P' in the exact spot on the lawn.

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There is a student documenting the whole process in the building opposite (outside the frame) As it is not possible to step back and see the artwork from time to time - to understand the placement and proportions - it is important to keep communicating with the student playing the cameraman. Here the students are finding out what is the area getting captured in the camera, and where exactly they need to place the typography.



Students are carrying and arranging all the props onto the lawn, where the typography is to be staged.

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A top view shows how they begin assembling benches, tables and cane mats to roughly create the form of the letters 'P' and 'A'. It is important to bear in mind that the look, feel and weight of the type is totally dependent on the props that are found and being used. In this case the continuity of style in the font is not through the weight and proportions, but rather through the common nature and function of the props used to stage the type.



By late afternoon they have all the props onto the lawn space, and have roughly arranged the four letters spelling P-A-R-K.

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The guide communicating with the cameraman. The cameraman is the most important link to getting the typography correctly placed and creating the letterform accurately. Students can also take turns in going up and doing the documenting, as this will also give them a chance to see where they are going wrong and which letters are looking readable and correct from above.



As you can see, some more clarifications are required with the cameraman while creating the letter 'R' which was tricky to make.

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Interesting visitors pay a visit to the lawn during the afternoon, when the team is taking a break.



After getting the first word done, the team begins to create the second word H-E-R-E. Unlike the word 'Park' this word is being written in cursive handwriting with a thick rope.



Unwinding the rope is a tedious task, as is getting it to move and curve according to the way the text has to flow.



The completed artwork. PARK HERE. In the evening people are also a part of it. They have 'parked' themselves onto the lawn to enjoy the breeze over a cup of tea. Thus, fulfilling the purpose of the artwork. The resulting artwork shows to what degree the choice of a relevant material influences the impact of the words.

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References

- <http://vimeo.com/39204981>

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/course/handmade-type-part-3/references>

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Video

This is the most important part of the module. It is very important to capture a video of how the artwork was thought of and made. This video was a series of images that was put together to create a time-lapse. As the resulting typography is not an end in itself, but rather the process of making it and the journey of learning things through it, is what is more important. The video is an apt way to show how people interact with the space and amongst themselves, transforming it into a dynamic and beautiful space for people to park themselves on.

The designers today are allowing the resources of visual communication to grow, adding a plethora of new materials and methods to work with. An excellent example would be Stefan Sagmeister's work for the Standard Chartered bank that can be seen here

<http://vimeo.com/39204981>



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Contact Details

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